

The essential visitor's guide to

# WAREHAM

A Saxon walled town

## HISTORIC WAREHAM



Wareham is located between the Rivers Frome and Piddle, and is built on a site that was occupied as far back as the Iron Age, with pottery and coins giving evidence of Roman activity.

The word Wareham is of Saxon origin and means 'homestead by the weir'. During Saxon times, the town

became established as an important cross-Channel port and the River Frome and what is now The Quay, would have been a very busy place. Ships used to arrive here from the continent and unloaded their cargoes for distribution throughout the area - the trade being mostly salt and potters' clay.

Wareham Town Walls were built to defend the town from Viking attacks. They surround the heart of the town on three sides (the fourth side being defended by the River Frome) and are the best preserved Saxon town defences in England.

After the prosperous times of Saxon England, the Middle Ages were a period of slow but inevitable decline as the river silted up and trade transferred to the new port of Poole.

The Civil War in the 17th Century was a turbulent time for Wareham. The town changed hands several times and it was Parliamentary forces that removed masonry from the defensive walls and reduced them to half their previous height. However, the earth banks of the original walls remain today – follow the Walls Walk and take a step back in time.

In recognition of its historical importance, Wareham has been designated as a Conservation Area with over two hundred buildings listed as being of architectural interest and Wareham Town Walls have been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.



- 600s - First church built by the River Frome
- Early 700s - Lady St. Mary Church built
- 784 - Wareham was first recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle
- 875 - Wareham Town Walls were completed following instructions from King Alfred the Great
- 876 - Vikings captured the town
- 1020 - St. Martin on the Walls Church built
- 1066 - Wareham was Dorset's largest town
- 1086 - The Domesday Book recorded two mints in the town
- 1110 - Wareham Castle was completed
- 1584 - Elizabeth I sells Wareham Castle
- 1685 - Monmouth Rebellion: 5 Wareham men were executed at Bloody Bank on West Walls by order of Judge Jeffreys
- 1762 - The Great Fire of Wareham destroys over 140 buildings - any remaining thatched buildings mark the boundary of the fire
- 1847 - The Railway arrives
- 1927 - South Bridge re-built: 10th Century sword discovered near the bridge - a replica of the sword is now at Wareham Town Museum
- 1952-54 - Archaeological dig carried out on the Walls



### THE WALLS WALK

Wareham Town Walls were originally built in Saxon times to defend the town from Viking attacks. Travel through time along the Walls Walk.

### THE TOWN WALK

Explore Wareham's 2000 years of history by following the Town Walk which ends at The Quay.



# EXPLORING WAREHAM



The Quay is a lively meeting place with pubs and restaurants and is host to many events, plus a market every Saturday. Take a boat trip, have a picnic, follow a riverside walk or simply sit on the quayside watching the river flow by. The Quay is also where many of our walking and cycling routes start - leaflets are available from Discover Purbeck Information Centre.

If you're looking for somewhere to have a bite to eat, you are spoilt for choice with nearly 30 cafes, pubs, restaurants or tea rooms catering for every taste and budget.

Why not end the day with a film or show at the town's cinema, The Rex? It has an old-school charm about it and you can sit back with a glass of wine or head to the back row to sit in the lovers' seats!



Friendly staff will help you with information on where to stay, what to do, places to visit, entertainment and events.

- Guidebooks • maps • postcards
- greetings cards • stamps • gifts
- booking service for accommodation, ferries and local events.



**OPENING HOURS, SUMMER** Monday to Saturday (Sunday during school summer holidays) 10am - 5pm  
**WINTER** - Monday to Saturday 10am - 4pm

**A day trip just isn't enough - find somewhere to stay**  
[visit-dorset.com/accommodation](http://visit-dorset.com/accommodation)

# SHOPPING

There are lots of individual and interesting shops from galleries and boutiques to butchers and farm shops - so you can get everything you need whilst shopping locally. Or why not stop by at one of our markets?



## THURSDAY MARKETS

**Home Producers Market,**  
United Reformed Church, Church Street, 8.30am - 11am

## Farmers Market

Town Hall, East Street, 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, 9am - 1pm

## SATURDAY MARKETS

**The Quay** 8am - 3pm



Wareham is a Fairtrade town and is also part of Purbeck District which has been a Fairtrade Zone since 2006. Many shops in the town sell Fairtrade products and support Fairtrade Fortnight held annually in February/March.



# THE WALLS WALK

Start the Walls Walk at Streche Road Car Park – see map overleaf. The walk takes about 45 minutes, is signposted and has information boards along the route. You can purchase the Wareham Walls Walk booklet from Discover Purbeck Information Centre for more information about the town's colourful past and amazing natural history.

From the car park, walk along the top of the Walls heading north, then turn right onto North Walls. Enjoy views of the Common, the River and beyond towards Wareham Forest.




















Continue along North Walls, passing the church of St. Edward the Martyr, then down Shatters Hill and turn right into North Street. Walk towards the town centre for about 20 metres, cross the road and turn left towards St. Martin on the Walls Church and the War Memorial. Turn right at the Church and walk along Lady's Walk. Turn left into St. Martins Lane and then right, up onto the Walls.

Where North Walls meet East Walls, there is an area of open space known as the Bowling Green. Follow the path around to the right towards East Street.

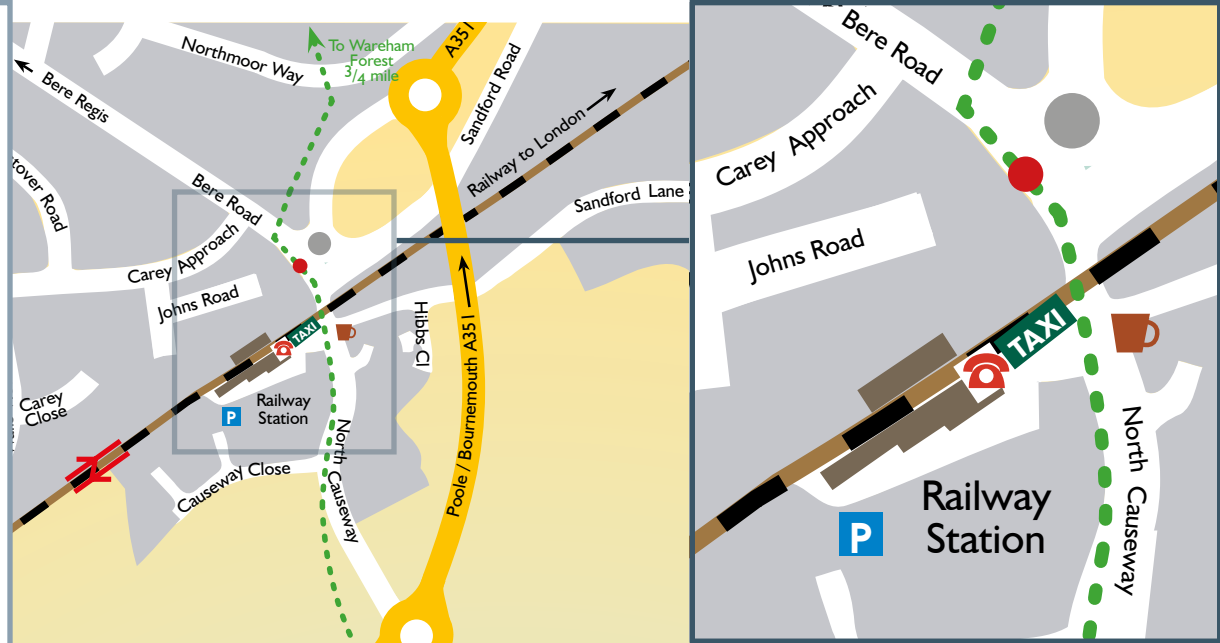
Cross East Street and continue along the Walls, which gradually fade out into a leafy lane. This point marks the end of the Walls.

Continue straight on then turn right into Connegar Lane which runs between two churchyards. Follow the road as it becomes Church Lane and turn left into Church Street, walking towards Lady St. Mary Church. Walk diagonally across Church Green following the signpost towards The Quay. To return to Streche Road car park, follow the Town Walk (directions overleaf) from point 1 to 4.



-  Tourist Information Centre
-  Bus Stop
-  Wareham Town Museum
-  Supermarket
-  Coach Parking (long stay)
-  Place of Worship
-  Car Park (long stay)
-  Walls Walk, (approx. 45 mins)
-  Car Park (short stay)
-  Town Walk, (approx. 25 mins)
-  One Way Street
-  Refreshments
-  Telephone Box
-  Access to Two Rivers Walks, Wareham Forest Way and Purbeck Way
-  Public Convenience
-  Northport Greenway Walk/ Cycle route to Wareham Forest
-  Taxi Rank
-  Pedestrian areas
-  Post Office
-  Wareham Walls

Walking and cycling leaflets are available from Discover Purbeck Information Centre.



The Friends of Wareham Railway Station was formed in 2012 to care for and enhance the heritage of the listed Grade II Station built in 1885. Visit the Waiting Room on Platform 1 to see displays of memorabilia.





## THE TOWN WALK

Start this 25 minute walk at Discover Purbeck Information Centre (inside The Library).

- ① Cross South Street at the bridge, turning into **Abbot's Quay**, then right into Tanners Lane.
- ② The **Rectory of Lady St. Mary parish church's** most famous resident was Rev. John Hutchins MA, Rector of Wareham from 1744 to 1773. He compiled his "History of Antiquities of the County of Dorset" here. The building replaces an earlier rectory which was destroyed in the 1762 fire. Turn left into Pound Lane - notice the Norman Arch in The Rectory's garden wall, which is believed to be reused stonework from Wareham Castle.
- ③ On the left is the site of **Wareham Castle** - built on instructions from William the Conqueror. Documents imply that the Castle was completed by 1110, but it is not known when it was destroyed. Today, the only visible remains are the mound where the house now stands and traces of the surrounding ditch. Massive stone foundations have been discovered approx. 15ft underground and the base of a stone keep survives inside the mound.
- ④ At the end of Pound Lane, is the **Town Pound** - originally built to hold stray and impounded animals.
- ⑤ Turn right into West Street. **The Rex Cinema** is home to the annual Purbeck Film Festival and both the interior and exterior are still furnished in 1920's style. At the crossroads and turn left into North Street.

- ⑥ **St. Martin on the Walls Church** stands on the North Walls. The Chancel and Nave are pre-Conquest of the 11th century and there are early medieval wall paintings and an effigy of Lawrence of Arabia carved by Eric Kennington.



- ⑦ Retrace your steps back to the crossroads and turn left into East Street. The present **Town Hall** is on the left and was built in 1870. It replaces an earlier town hall, school, jail and butcher's shop, which were built in 1768. Before that, the parish church of St. Peter was here - the first priest was recorded in 1321. Today, the Town Hall is used for Town Council meetings, weddings and civil ceremonies, and the ground floor for social functions, exhibitions and farmers markets.
- ⑧ **Wareham Town Museum** (next to the Town Hall) has displays of local artefacts and a special section on Lawrence of Arabia. The museum is open from Easter to end of October (Monday to Saturday 10am - 4pm) and admission is free.
- ⑨ Opposite the Museum are the **Almshouses**. Founded by John Streche who died in 1418, they were rebuilt in 1741. The bell tower was originally part of the 1768 Town Hall. At the traffic lights turn left into South Street.
- ⑩ On the left is Lloyds Bank. The bank stands on the site of **The Bull's Head Inn**, believed to be the place where the 1762 fire of Wareham began.

- ⑪ Further along, the **Manor House**, built in 1712, is a fine, dignified, early Queen Anne three storey building.
- ⑫ On the opposite side of the road, set back in a courtyard, is the **Wareham Conservative Club**. Originally this was built as the Unitarian Church and used as such until 1960.
- ⑬ **The Black Bear Hotel** has a life-sized statue of a bear over the door. The first reference to a "Bear Hotel" in Wareham was in 1747, but this was destroyed in the fire of 1762 and replaced by the present building in 1770.
- ⑭ After the traffic lights, turn left into St. John's Hill and follow the path towards the church. **Gold Court** is reputed to stand on the site of Wareham's mint, established by King Athelstan in the early 10th century.
- ⑮ Turn right into Church Green. The parish **Church of Lady St. Mary** is built on the site of an 8th century Minster church and still boasts a 14th century chancel and Tudor Tower with a ring of 10 bells. The Church contains a number of interesting objects, including five pre-Conquest inscriptions (dating from the 7th century to circa 800), a 12th century lead font and two 13th century military effigies.
- ⑯ **The Priory Hotel** next to the church, is an early 16th century building which was formerly the home of a monastery. The monastery was preceded by a nunnery, founded according to legend, by St. Aldhelm in the 8th century.
- ⑰ Follow the sign from Church Green down a narrow lane to **The Quay**.